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OUTSKIRTS
OF
REVELATION

BY

HENRY HARRIS, B.D.

RECTOR OF WINTERBOURNE BASSETT, WILTS, AND
LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

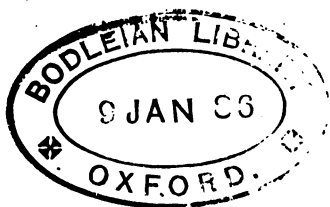
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NOTICE.

THE subjects here treated of, with the exception of the last, lie almost entirely on the extreme verge of the light diffused by revelation. It is, therefore, with great diffidence that I submit the conclusions at which I have arrived respecting them to the impartial judgment of the reader.

With one exception, again, that of "The Serpent in Paradise," this little volume is composed of the substance of papers read by me at meetings of the Calne Valley Clerical Society within the last few years.



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OUTSKIRTS OF REVELATION.

I. THE SERPENT IN PARADISE.

INTRODUCTION.

It was a favourite remark of the late J. S. Mill that a world so full of evil as this is cannot have for its Author and Governor one who is both absolute in power and perfect in goodness. Now, however we may dispute the validity of this objection, it is impossible to deny the fact on which it is grounded. Not only is there a tremendous amount of evil in the world, but much of it at least cannot fairly be regarded simply in the light of an imperfection, such as naturally attends the transition from a lower stage of growth into a higher. We cannot shut our eyes to the plain fact that this evil of which I am speaking is, in very many instances, of a positive, and not merely negative character. If the good which is in the world is real good, so also is the evil real evil, the result of some influence distinctly and decidedly antagonistic to the working of the Good Spirit.

Again, if the most pronounced forms of the evil in the world are traceable directly or indirectly to human agency, there is also a by no means inconsiderable residuum which cannot be in any way attributed to such agency. It lies altogether outside the world of man. And although

for this very reason we cannot hope to obtain much information respecting it from revelation, which is chiefly a record of God's dealings with man, yet the similarity of evil in the two cases suggests a sameness of origin in each. And this becomes the more probable in proportion as we recognise the unity of plan and purpose which runs through creation, binding together the separate parts into one consistent whole.

(a) *The Mystery of the Brute Creation.*

IT is recorded of Dr. Arnold that intense as his love was for flowers and plants, yet from everything in the animal world he had an instinctive shrinking. "The whole subject," he said, "of the brute creation is to me one of such painful mystery that I dare not approach it¹." Nor is either the mystery or the painfulness which accompanies it at all likely to be diminished on a closer inspection. "In the vast domain of living nature," says Count Joseph de Maistre, "open violence reigns, a kind of fury which arms all creation *in mutua funera*. Even in the vegetable kingdom we have a presentiment of the law. From the immense catalpa down to the humblest grasses how many plants die and how many are killed! But when you enter the animal kingdom the law assumes all at once a fearful prominence. In each great division of the tribes of animal life there exists a certain number of animals whose occupation it is to destroy the rest. There are insects of prey, fishes of prey, reptiles of prey, birds of prey, and beasts of prey. There is not a

¹ Arnold's Life, by Stanley, ii. 348 (first edition).

moment of time when some living creature is not destroying or being destroyed by another¹." Now, if in the days of our fathers any one had been appealed to for a solution of this mystery he would probably have looked for it in the fall of our first parents. Up to that moment he would have maintained there was no such thing as death or suffering in the world; all nature was one harmonious scene of life and peace and enjoyment until man's first disobedience let loose the torrent of disorder and strife and destruction, not upon himself alone, but on the whole world around him. We, however, of the present generation have been driven to seek elsewhere for a solution of this mystery. The recently deciphered tablets of the earth's surface have proved to us most distinctly that the pain and slaughter which are so rife in the animal world existed ages and ages before the appearance of the first man on the earth. And how came this sad state of things about? How is it to be reconciled with the concluding words of the first chapter of Genesis, "God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good²?"

It has been asserted, then, in answer to such questions, that, taking the animal world as a whole, there is less suffering under the present condition of its existence than we can conceive of under any other. Death to an animal through the instrumentality of another animal is in most instances quite sudden, so that less suffering may be

¹ Quoted by Naville, "The Problem of Evil," p. 54 (English translation). M. Naville fully admits the difficulty of the problem as here stated, but makes no attempt to solve it.

² Genesis i. 31.

supposed to accompany it than would be the case were life permitted in every instance to drag itself on through each successive stage of decrepitude and decay. But this way of arguing only serves to show that the condition of the animal world might conceivably be worse than it actually is. It is very far from proving that the existing state of things is the best possible. Why, it may still be asked, should life be called into existence only to perish, at any rate, to perish prematurely, as in most instances it does? Why, if it must perish, should it not be allowed to run itself out, like the sands in an hour-glass, without any of the accompaniments of pain and suffering which so generally attach themselves to its extinction?

Let it be clearly understood that I am here speaking of the brute creation alone, to the exclusion of man. Suffering and pain, and even death, may, and doubtless do often produce a remedial effect on him which could not be produced by any other means. But, so far as we comprehend the animal races, the case is altogether different with them. And we cannot avoid looking upon the pain and violent deaths which are constantly being inflicted on them in the light of so much evil. And this evil we now know to have existed long previously to the creation and fall of man. And how came this evil there?

In speaking of evil we must of course beware of confounding merely physical with moral evil. Moral evil can come into existence only through moral agency, whereas the animal races do not appear to be endowed with sufficient capacity to be reckoned in the class of moral agents. If there is anything of moral good or moral evil in animals it is, for the most part at least, latent and undeveloped.

As regards physical evil, on the contrary, very distinct signs of it began to exhibit themselves in the world almost from the very beginning. Storms and floods, earthquakes and volcanoes, together with other tokens of disorder and violence in the inanimate world, strife and suffering and death by violence in the animal world, all were in full activity at a very remote period of the earth's history, and formed an ill-omened introduction to the appearance of man himself on this stage of his existence.

Let us now turn to the Scripture narrative, or rather narratives, for there are at least three of them contained in the beginning of Genesis¹, and let us see whether there is any recognition in them of the existence of evil in the world previously to the fall, if not to the creation, of our first parents.

The third chapter of Genesis then opens with a description of the serpent as "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made²." Without inquiring minutely into the precise quality here predicated of the serpent, it is sufficient to say that there is something decisively evil in it, and evil which perhaps extended itself to other animals, so at least the comparative expression "more subtle" might seem to indicate. Moreover, it is a description of the serpent in itself³, and not simply as

¹ Viz. (a) i-ii. 3; (b) ii. 4; (c) v. 1, 2.

² Gen. iii. 1. The Hebrew term of which 'subtle' is the translation, stands for either the baser or the nobler qualities which are capable of being developed out of the same groundwork of character. Comp. Prov. xii. 16. For an example of the brighter side of the serpent's character, see also Matthew x. 16.

³ Compare Müller, "Christian Doctrine of Sin," ii. 429 (Clarke's translation).

actuated or influenced by some other power. Not that I am denying, on the contrary I shall soon have occasion to insist on, an influence or possession of this very kind, but for the present I confine myself to the simple narrative of Scripture in which the serpent itself acts the part of tempter just as distinctly as the woman and the man act their respective parts in the same scene. Accordingly, it is on the serpent as such that the curse in the first instance falls. "Because thou hast done this thing thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life¹." It is quite true that in the verses which next follow, the curse appears to overflow the "vessel of wrath" upon which it is immediately poured, into the still wider and deeper vessel in which this is contained; but that in no way disproves the point for which I am contending, that throughout the narrative in the Book of Genesis the serpent, in its own subtle and malignant character, acts the part of tempter, and as such draws down the curse of God, in the first instance, on its own head. Notwithstanding, then, the account given at the close of the narrative of the creation of the earth, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good;" the serpent here appears before us, and that previously to man's fall, in quite an opposite character. It is distinctly evil, evil in itself and the occasion of still worse evil in others. Antecedently to man, the brute creation exhibited the highest type of life to be seen in the earth, and this type had already, in some instances at least, shown symptoms of being tainted with evil. Again, not only is this evil to be

¹ Genesis iii. 14.

found in the world at large outside the sacred precincts of the spot selected as a dwelling-place for our first parents, but it is in the very heart of the garden of Eden itself that the serpent tempts the woman with the sight of the forbidden fruit hanging on the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Paradise itself appears haunted with strange powers of evil lurking amongst the flowers and fruits of the garden. And even if the narrative be regarded, as its contents would seem to dispose us to regard it, rather in the light of a figurative and symbolical representation than of actual history, still it is a representation, no doubt, as full of meaning and instruction for us as if it were actual history.

Reference has already been made to the geological record in proof of the existence of pain and death in the world before the fall of man. Let us now see what this same record has to disclose to us respecting the history of the serpent, whose character is depicted in such dark colours in the Bible narrative.

I subjoin the following extract from a chapter in Hugh Miller's "Footprints of the Creator," entitled "The progress of degradation¹." "Though all creatures be fitted by nature for the life which their instincts teach them to pursue, naturalists have learned to recognize among them certain aberrant and mutilated forms in which the type of the special class to which they belong seems distorted and degraded. They exist as the monster families of Creation. . . . Among these degraded races, that of the footless serpent, which 'goeth upon its belly,' has been long noted by the theologian as a race typical in its condition and

¹ Page 157.

nature of an order of hopelessly degraded beings borne down to the dust by a clinging curse; and curiously enough, when the first comparative anatomists in the world give their readiest and most prominent instance of degradation among the denizens of the natural world, it is this very order of footless reptiles that they select. As far as the geologist yet knows, the Ophidians did not appear during the secondary ages, when the monarchs of creation belonged to the reptilian division, but were ushered upon the scene in the times of the Tertiary deposits, when the mammalian dynasty had supplanted that of the Iguanodon and Megalosaurus. Their ill-omened birth took place when the influence of their house was on the wane, as if to set such a stamp of utter hopelessness on its forlorn condition as that set by the birth of a worthless or idiot heir on the fortunes of a sinking family. The degradation of the Ophidians consists in the absence of limbs, an absence total in by much the greater number of their families, and represented in others, as in the boas and pythons, by mere abortive hinder limbs concealed in the skin; but they are thus not only monsters through defect of parts, if I may so express myself, but also monsters through redundancy, as a vegetative repetition of vertebrae and ribs to the number of three or four hundred forms the special contrivance by which the want of these is compensated. I am also disposed to regard the poison-bag of the venomous snakes as a mark of degradation. It seems, judging from analogy, to be a protective provision of a low character exemplified chiefly in the invertebrate families—ants, and centipedes, and mosquitos, spiders, wasps, and scorpions. The higher carnivora are, we find, furnished with unpoisoned weapons, which

like those of civilized man, are sufficiently effective simply from the excellence of their construction and the power with which they are wielded for every purpose of assault or defence. It is only the squalid savages and degraded boschmen of creation that have their feeble teeth and tiny stings steeped in venom and so made formidable."

In one point, indeed, the geological record appears to be at variance with the account of the curse inflicted on the serpent as recorded in the Book of Genesis. According to the former, the serpent had already, before the fall of man, assumed the creeping attitude and generally degraded condition which is represented in the latter as the effect of the curse pronounced upon it after the temptation and fall. And this tends to confirm the view which has already been advanced on other grounds, that the Scripture account of the temptation is to be regarded in the light of a symbolical representation rather than of actual history. Be this, however, as it may, it is sufficient here to remark that both Scripture and geology concur in establishing the main point for which I am contending—the existence, namely, of evil in the animal world before the fall of man. Indeed, in the geological record of the serpent's degradation we have a distinct though slight prelude to the fall of man.

Nor is the serpent the only instance of this process of degradation observable in nature. Everywhere, on the contrary, alike in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, we keep continually coming upon fresh examples of this downward and retrograde movement¹ occurring in the midst of others of an upward and forward growth, each revealing

¹ Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," pp. 317, 341.

its own character all the more clearly by means of the contrast presented by its opposite. And this downward as well as its corresponding upward tendency, besides exhibiting itself as it does in full force at the present day¹, is no less distinctly traceable by the aid of geological research in ages long antecedent to the coming of man.

(b) *The Devil and his Angels.*

I HAVE hitherto insisted on the fact that throughout the narrative contained in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, the serpent in his own subtle and evil character figures as the chief actor in the scene of the temptation of our first parents. But if we now turn to the Book of Revelation, which in many respects forms the exact counterpart to the Book of Genesis, we find mention made of "the great dragon that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world²." And here we find a confirmation of what must have already suggested itself that the devil himself acted as prompter and prime mover on the scene just referred to. And yet it was not by mere chance, so to speak, that he selected the serpent to play the part of tempter, as though any other creature would have equally served his purpose. There must have been something congenial in the serpent's own character to lend itself so readily to the part assigned to it. Again, whatever of evil lurked in the serpent must have been in the first instance of the devil's own originating. So that we

¹ Sir J. Lubbock on Ants, etc., p. 88.

² Rev. xii. 9. (Compare Wisdom ii. 24.)

may safely conclude that it was he who had thrown up this covering to the way by which he now proposed to himself to steal in upon his victims. His own hands had tempered and given its point to the weapon which he now employed in their destruction. In plainer language, the devil must previously to the temptation of our first parents have acquired a dominion over some part at least of the animal world, and so secured to himself a vantage ground from which to ply his assault on man. I commenced with remarking on the mystery which attaches itself to the subject of the brute creation. But here in this evil power by which the serpent was animated or guided we come upon a subject still more deeply involved in mystery¹. It cannot be doubted that in the eyes of our Blessed Lord Himself and of His apostles the devil stood possessed of a distinctly personal existence², and that he was continually exercising a most powerful and most malignant influence upon the affairs of this world. With them he is the Prince³, the god of this world⁴, the Prince of the power of the air⁵. Nor is there anything to lead us to believe that this power came into his hands for the first time on the occasion of our first parents' fall. Indeed, his employment of the serpent on that very occasion is inconsistent with such a supposition. Neither, again, does it appear that

¹ On the subject of good and evil angels, compare Rothe, Dogmatik, i. 205.

² This personality is forcibly brought out in the Revised Version of the New Testament. See Matthew vi. 13, "Deliver us *from the evil one*," and 1 John v. 19, "The whole world lieth *in the evil one*."

³ John xii. 31.

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 4. Compare Rothe, Dogmatik, i. 223.

⁵ Ephesians ii. 2.

the devil stands alone in the possession and exercise of his malignant power. On the contrary, hosts and hierarchies¹ of evil spirits are represented as ranged under him and acting with his authority. And although their work is carried on for the most part in secret and under cover, of what appear to us simply in the light of diseases and other unkindly phenomena of nature, yet the presence of our Blessed Lord in the flesh had, as we learn from the Gospel records, the effect of dragging them forth for the time, at least from their hiding places, and of revealing them to us in something of their real nature.

What the actual history of the devil and his angels is, for they too, equally with us, must have a history; what they were originally, what they now are, and by what means they came to be what they are, what again is the precise nature of the hold which they acquired for themselves over this world, all this is for the most part matter of pure conjecture. Yet we have the authority of Scripture for asserting that of the spirits originally created by God Himself, some, though we know not what proportion, chose to make an ill use of the power and freedom of choice with which they were originally endowed; and what then more likely than that in the place of elaborating, as we may well suppose them to have been set to do, ever fresh forms of order and beauty out of the elementary principles of nature through the instrumentality of the laws imposed upon it by its great Creator, they should have set themselves to thwart Him in every possible manner and to impregnate the work of His hands, as far as lay in their power, with their own evil leaven, and so

¹ Ephesians vi. 12; Colossians ii. 15. Compare Rothe, *Dogmatik*, i. 217, and Bishop Lightfoot's note to Colossians i. 16.

educe by degrees all kinds of disorder and strife and suffering out of the materials placed at their disposal. We know by experience what an amount of change in the forms and habits of both plants and animals may be brought about by man himself, in the course of only a few generations, simply through his availing himself of nature's own laws, and the materials which she herself places at his disposal. And how vast then may have been the extent and variety of change brought about in the course of almost endless ages such as Geology tells us of, through the agency of beings possessed, we may presume, of powers at least equal to our own, and of an intensity and malignity of purpose far exceeding those of the worst of men! And what then is there improbable in the supposition that it is to them that we owe those varied forms of degradation, those savage instincts and deadly weapons which have armed one half of the animal world and set them in array against the other half¹?

Let me not be supposed for a moment to be calling in question the goodness of God, or the declaration of Scripture that "He saw all things that He had made, and behold, they were very good,"—good, that is to say, in respect of their original idea and purpose, good also in anticipation of that perfect condition at which they will ultimately arrive. For the present, however, and for some time past,

¹ A somewhat similar explanation to that here put forward was long ago suggested by Origen. So long, however, as the several species in nature were regarded as distinct creations separated from each other by impassable barriers, it was obviously impossible to maintain a theory of this kind without investing beings whom we must regard as mere creatures, of however exalted a rank, with the special prerogative of the Creator Himself.

we have to deal with the intermediate stage through which we, and all creation along with us, are passing on our way from the beginning to the end. We can see absolutely nothing of the deep out of which we have issued, nor of that for which we are bound. We can see but a very little of what lies closest to us; so far, however, as our eyes are open to the scene before us, we discern evil everywhere mixing itself up with the good. Earth and air, and water, and fire, all of them appear to be possessed with powers of evil. And all this sad state of things, man and his doings and sufferings alone excepted (alas! how large an exception), we now know to have existed ages and ages before the time when the first man made his appearance on the earth. Evil was already there, and only awaited his arrival to seize upon him as it had done on the successive forms of life before him, and so to advance itself a step still higher in the scale of its own existence.

The above representation of the agency of evil spirits, however correct it may be in itself, would, however, be far from presenting us with a complete picture of what is going on in the world around us and in us, did we not also take into account the presence and counteragency of good spirits, a fact so clearly revealed to us in Scripture, and so plainly exemplified in our Blessed Lord's earthly history, throughout which from first to last He was heralded and waited upon by angels. And if for the representations of their presence under the various forms and forces of nature, we are indebted chiefly to the so-called poetical portions of Scripture, yet we may do well to bear in mind the numerous instances in which the highest flights of the imagination only rise to a level with the most

sober and essential forms of truth. And surely if it is permitted to evil spirits to roam about seeking whom they may devour, we may safely infer the presence of hosts of good spirits counteracting their evil designs and carrying out God's own good and gracious purposes towards the works of His own hands.

It will, no doubt, be easy to regard this representation of the agency of both good and evil spirits in the world, as a mere hypothesis, invented simply to account for a certain set of phenomena in nature, and as possessing no other claims on our acceptance. But the fact, at least, of the existence of good and evil spirits is over and over again emphatically attested by Scripture, as is also that of the deep interest which they take in us, and in some instances at least their active interference in behalf of us, or against us, and their at least partial control over the affairs of the world. All, then, that I am here proposing to do is to extend this known and recognized law of spiritual agency, so as to make it account for certain cases somewhat beyond, yet at the same time strictly akin to those which it is allowed to embrace. And I do so on the ground that a reasonable explanation is thus afforded of certain phenomena in nature, which, as usually regarded, present us with a most disquieting and distressing, and at the same time wholly insoluble problem.

(c) *The Creation and Fall of Man.*

WE have, then, reasons for believing that, in spite of God having pronounced all the works of His hands to be very good, some of them at least began to exhibit taints

of evil long before man made his appearance in the world, himself too like the animal tribes formed out of the dust of the earth, though unlike them with the image and likeness of his Creator impressed upon him¹.

In what, however, did this image and likeness consist? Here, it must be freely acknowledged, we come upon a most difficult question, and one which has been rendered still more so by the attempts which have been so often made to force more out of these pregnant, yet somewhat indefinite figures of speech than they appear to yield freely of themselves².

Viewing them, then, in the light of the context in which they appear, we may take the Divine image and likeness to consist, firstly, in the relation which man assumed towards the other inhabitants of the world in which he was placed. He was to have, by God's express sanction and as His special representative, "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth³."

But besides this reference to what lay beneath him, we cannot avoid seeing a distinct reference also to what stood next above him in the scale of creation. Man was raised not only high above the rest of creation, but to something of the same level with God Himself. He was formed with a capacity for knowing God and loving Him; he was admitted to stand in God's presence, to converse freely with Him, and so become by degrees

¹ Genesis i. 26, 27.

² Compare Müller, "Christian Doctrine of Sin," ii. 390 (E. T.), and Dorner, "System of Christian Doctrine," ii. 78 (E. T.).

³ Genesis i. 28.

more and more like Him on whom he was permitted to gaze.

We may perhaps catch a faint trace of this, the highest type of expression in creation, even in man's bodily form and features, still more in those intellectual endowments which have enabled him to exercise the supremacy over the rest of the world which was assigned him at his creation. But it is in man's moral, and, above all, in his spiritual capacities and faculties that we most distinctly recognize the characteristic features of which we are in search—features, nevertheless, which, as they look out upon us from the narrative in the Book of Genesis, appear arrayed in all the first fresh simplicity and artless innocence of childhood rather than in the ripeness and perfection of full-grown manhood¹. And here, again, at this point of our inquiry another most difficult question presents itself. How far was man at his first coming into existence left free to choose for himself, and to act upon his own choice between good and evil? There is, of course, the obvious reply that the mere injunction to abstain from eating of the forbidden fruit, together with the threat attached to his eating of it, implied a full power on man's own part of abstaining from it if he wished to do so. But might we not also on the same principle contend that the commands which were subsequently issued to Adam's descendants to abstain from this and that evil act, implied a full power on their part of so abstaining? And yet we know very well that this was far from being actually the case. By the

¹ Compare Rothe, *Dogmatik*, i. 263, 268; and Dorner, "System of Christian Doctrine," ii. 77 (E. T.).

law came indeed the knowledge of sin, but it came unaccompanied with the full power to abstain from sin. And what ground have we for maintaining that it was altogether different in the case of our first parents? To make this point as clear as possible let us only compare the circumstances of their fall with those of the devil's fall before them. There could have been nothing, then, to tempt the devil on to his fall. It must have been from first to last the self-evolved determination of his own free will, the simple result of his own deliberate act. With them, on the contrary, it was the result of an insidious attack made on them from without. But, for the tempter and his wiles, who can say that our first parents would not have remained firm in their allegiance to their Maker, and gradually rooted themselves in habits of obedience? I am very far indeed from denying the fact of man's fall. It is a matter of daily experience that he has fallen. I am not in the least impugning the great Apostle's statement, that "through man and his disobedience sin entered into the world, and (so far, at least, as man himself is concerned) death by sin¹."

Whatever evil there may have been hitherto in the world, it had not as yet ripened into sin. It had had no opportunity given it for doing so. If the animal races that existed in the world before the creation of man committed actions wrong in themselves, yet they committed them, just as they go on still committing them, without a distinct consciousness that they did wrong in committing them. They knew of no law to forbid them. But with man the case assumed quite a different aspect from the

¹ Romans v. 12.

very beginning. Man was formed with a capacity for knowing the real character of what he did. And so actions, that were simply wrong in themselves when committed by the brute creation, became sin in man, and sin too, which, like other forms of evil, possessed a fearful capacity for transmitting itself from one generation to another, in accordance with the well-known law of heredity, until, in the course of its descent, it has involved us of the present day in the consequences of our first parents' sin. So far, then, from denying the doctrines of the Fall and original sin, I am only endeavouring to trace them both back to the source from which they issued. I am only charging the devil with the guilt, at least by far the greater share of the guilt, of our first parents' fall. And I do so in exact accordance with our Blessed Lord's words: "He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth¹;" whereas, we are far too much disposed to look upon the Fall in the light of a suicide rather than a murder. Similarly, the beloved disciple says, "He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil²;" words, again, which convey us back beyond the Fall to the original spring-head from which it issued. It may be argued that in thus thrusting back the responsibility of our first parents upon their tempter, we are, in fact, seeking to relieve ourselves from all participation in it. But our own condition is not in the least affected by

¹ John viii. 44. See Westcott's note (in Speaker's Commentary), and Müller, "Christian Doctrine of Sin," ii. 431 (E. T.).

² 1 John iii. 8.

the transfer. The burden itself presses with precisely the same weight on our shoulders, whatever may have been the precise means by which it came to be imposed upon them, and whether through the fault principally of our first parents, or of their tempter. We have seen, then, that long before the existence of man, evil was in the world in such shapes and kinds as it was then capable of assuming, though it was only when the germ, at least, of a far higher kind of life began to unfold itself, that evil found the opportunity of putting forth its full strength, and of revealing itself in something of its real nature. It was in man, consequently, that the open struggle first commenced between the two great rival powers of good and evil. And at the outset, as we know, both from Scripture and our own experience, evil succeeded in getting the upper hand, and so the Divine image in man became sadly disfigured, and the Divine likeness obscured in him, though that neither of them became wholly obliterated, is distinctly proved by the fact that long after the Fall both image¹ and likeness² are recognized in Scripture as still existing in all men.

As we pass in review all the sad consequences of the introduction of evil into the world, we cannot refrain from asking, why did God permit such havoc to be made with the work of His own hands? And the most satisfactory answer that can be given to the question is, that the existing state of things is the simple, indeed all but inevitable result of placing power in the hands of intelligent

¹ Genesis ix. 6. Compare Müller, "Christian Doctrine of Sin," ii. 393 (E. T.).

² James iii. 9. Compare Rothe, *Dogmatik*, i. 261.

beings, as the angels were, together with full permission to exercise this power in whatever manner they might choose to do. And, so far from its being matter of surprise to us that some proportion of the spiritual host chose to make an ill use of the trust committed to them, it would have been matter of far greater surprise if they had not. Then, indeed, we should have had good reason for doubting whether God had really endowed His creatures with a will and power of their own, if all of them, without exception, persisted in making a good use of their power.

And if, again, it is asked why God ever endowed His creatures with a will of their own, when He must have all along foreseen the ill use which some of them would make of it, the answer is that God wished to people His universe with life not mere machinery. He desired to surround Himself with beings as far as possible resembling Himself, capable of rendering back to Him the love which He had bestowed on them, and of yielding Him a willing and cheerful service, not merely a passive and servile submission¹.

We see, then, that it is only in strict agreement with what might have been anticipated, that the world exhibits the scene it actually does of evil everywhere intimately mixing itself up with good, and in too many instances overpowering the good. Still, after all, the temple of God remains exceedingly majestic even in ruins. The face of nature is wonderfully beautiful in spite of the many scars which disfigure it, and of the cancer which has eaten so deeply into it. And the laws by which the universe is sustained and carried forward are in themselves so many distinct manifestations of the Divine power and wisdom,

¹ See the "Genesis of Evil," by S. Cox, page 30.

notwithstanding the ill use to which they are often put, and the evil consequences which have been produced through their instrumentality.

(d) *The General Restoration.*

So far we have been looking on at the part played by the Evil One in the *dénouement* of the great drama of creation. We cannot, however, suppose that God would so absolutely entrust His works to the hands of created beings as to make no provision against the consequences of any ill use which they might choose to make of their power. So that the plan of redemption and restoration so far from being a mere after-thought and supplementary scheme, for the purpose of counteracting the results of an unforeseen accident, must have formed an essential part of God's plan from the very beginning. If evil was permitted to develop itself so freely, and to extend itself so widely, it was that it might be fully met at every point, and ultimately driven out for ever from the universe, into which, for God's own purposes, it had been permitted for the time to insinuate itself.

Again, independently of the need which arose for bringing back the order of creation to the point from which it had deflected in its course, all that we see of God's manner of working leads us to believe that it formed part of His original scheme to carry forward His work of creation by slow degrees to a richer state of perfection, and to raise it to a higher level than that upon which it entered at its first coming into existence. Accordingly, as might

have been anticipated, we find mention made in Scripture of the means adopted for the accomplishment of each of the above-mentioned purposes.

I. As it was in man, subjected to the power of the devil, that evil had succeeded in unfolding itself in this world, and in exhibiting its real character, so it was in man also that the great counter-principle of good subsequently embodied itself in all its divine fulness and power, in order that the two great rival powers might be directly confronted with each other, and the struggle between them brought to a decisive issue. And upon this occasion the tempter, who had been only too successful in his assault upon our nature in the persons of our first parents, found himself no less signally foiled. He had, indeed, succeeded in bruising the heel of the woman's seed, but now his own head was to be bruised¹. "Now is the judgment of this world," was the exclamation of our great Head and Champion as He was on the point of descending into the arena of this decisive combat; "now shall the Prince of this world be cast out²." And what, though we have still to wait for the open triumph, consequent on the great struggle which then took place, yet the battle itself has been long since won for us, and we have only to follow closely on the line of advance which our great Captain has marked out for us, to reap the full reward of His victory.

As we have seen, then, man himself as the head and lord of creation is the first and principal object of redemption and restoration; at the same time he is far from being the only one. Ages before his existence evil was

¹ Genesis iii. 15.

² John xii. 31.

in the world. Step by step it had stolen its way through each successive rank in creation before it finally culminated in man; and accordingly from man it had and still has to be driven backwards and downwards through each successive stage of its growth, until the whole creation, which for ages has gone on "groaning and travailing in pain together even until now, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God¹." Then at last the purpose of the Creator will be fully realized, and He will look forth for the second time upon the works of His hands, and pronounce them to be all very good, good this time in actual accomplishment, and not only as at the first in idea and, partly at least, unfulfilled promise. Whether this vast change in the world is to be brought about suddenly or by the same gradual process which has hitherto been maintained in the course of the world's history, we cannot venture to predict. It is enough to know that this restoration is one day to be an accomplished fact, and the great prophecy will witness its real and complete, even if not strictly, literal fulfilment, when "the wolf shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them²."

II. So far we have been viewing the recovery of lost ground. We have still to survey the fresh ground which remains to be won. And here, as regards man, the last and best, though alas also the most sadly marred of God's works, not only has the divine image in which he was first created been restored to its original form in the second Head and Root of our nature, Jesus Christ, but it

¹ Romans viii. 21.

² Isaiah xi. 6.

has also in Him been ennobled and glorified, and carried up from earth into heaven, and seated there at the right hand of God. Further, we have the authority of Scripture for believing that this same glorified image and likeness is in the course of being formed afresh in every sincere believer, whilst lastly, in man and his destination we see the whole of creation, of which He is the Head and Representative, moving forward together in slow and stately procession through a series of upward and downward movements, of hard conflicts and occasional defeats, to its final issue in "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness¹."

And, so far from regarding either department of this twofold scheme of restoration and advancement as an exception to the general plan of God's dealings, we ought rather to view it simply as the exhibition of nature in its final stage of development, at its highest elevation and widest range, and as such, embracing within its limits all that at present appears to us most miraculous in the Christian economy, equally with all that lies most distinctly within the range of our every-day vision.

We can scarcely refrain from asking here what is to become finally of all who, in the course of this great struggle between the opposing powers of good and evil, have ranged themselves on the side of evil? According, then, to one view the restoration, when fully accomplished, will be thoroughly coextensive with the fall, whether of man in this world or of other beings in the world of spirit; so that ultimately, according to this view, even the devil and his angels will be brought into the condition for which

¹ 2 Peter iii. 13.

they were originally designed by their Creator. This, however, is a subject which must be acknowledged to lie altogether outside the horizon of our present knowledge. All that we can say is, that between the fall of the devil and that of our first parents there appears to be this very essential difference, that whereas man fell through the agency of the great tempter, the tempter himself could have had no such plea to advance on his own behalf. His fall was from first to last self-determined throughout, and, consequently, his state must be far more hopeless than that of his victims, whose ruin he planned and effected.

More is to be said on behalf of the ultimate extension of the benefits of Christ's redemption to each individual of the human race, and there are passages in Scripture which may seem to countenance such a hope, though, on the other hand, there are at least two which appear to be most decidedly opposed to it. First, there is our Lord's declaration respecting the traitor Judas Iscariot, "It were good for that man if he had not been born¹." Now, it is impossible to account for the severity of such a sentence as this on the supposition that the ultimate salvation of Judas and such as he was secure, since any intensity, any duration of punishment, would be far more than outweighed by an eventual share in Jesus Christ's redemption and glorification. Then, secondly, there is the awful warning conveyed in our Lord's words, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come²." Open and avowed hatred of goodness, as such, appears to

¹ Matthew xxvi. 24.

² Matthew xii. 31, 32.

be the essential feature of this most deadly of all sins. And it appears to place the offender, so far as his actual condition is concerned, on much the same level with the Evil One himself, and equally with him removed beyond all hope of recovery. Whether the punishment of evil spirits, and finally adjudged evil men, will be everlasting in the strict meaning of the term is, it may be submitted, a point not absolutely determined in Scripture.

The expressions in the New Testament which refer to the future punishment of the wicked are mostly borrowed from the Old Testament, where they certainly have not the strict meaning of everlasting. And the term *αἰώνιος*, on which such stress is laid by the upholders of the doctrine of everlasting punishment, is in its substantive form *αἰών*, the LXX. rendering of the Hebrew *Olam*, the proper meaning of which is, "anything hidden, that of which the beginning or the end is uncertain or undefined. And when referred to time future, that which is called the *terminus ad quem* is always defined from the nature of the thing itself¹." So that the word may be said to shine with a borrowed light, and whatever definiteness of meaning it may be invested with for the moment, comes to it from the term with which it happens for the time to be associated. Speaking generally, however, the exact duration of time, past or future, referred to by it is a point left out of sight, and, consequently, undetermined by it.

It is not, however, upon the meaning of any single term or expression that our belief in the endless life of the true believer rests for its support. His whole existence is again and again described in Scripture as a life with Christ in God,

¹ Gesenius' Lexicon, under the word עולם.

and as participating in His life. It must, therefore, equally with God Himself be everlasting in the strictest sense of the term. The condition of the sinner and unbeliever, on the contrary, must be regarded as one of entire isolation from this the only true source of existence, a state in itself suggestive of extinction or annihilation, though here again scripture prohibits our looking forward even to such an awful means of escape as this, until at least a full measure of punishment has been dealt out to the impenitent and unbelieving sinner in exact proportion to his deserts.

Into the theory of conditional immortality, as it is called, it is scarcely necessary to enter, as it lies almost beyond the scope of the present inquiry. It is sufficient to remark that this theory contradicts one of the most deeply-seated and widely diffused of our instincts, viz. belief in a state of existence after death. Whereas the most consistent advocates of conditional immortality regard the soul in its unregenerate state as of the same perishable nature with the body, and so as terminating its existence along with that of the body. Consequently they are obliged to look forward to an absolutely fresh creation of the unregenerate soul at the day of judgment, in order that it may undergo the punishment due to it in its previous state of existence, a supposition which, involving as it does such a thorough break in the continuous existence and identity of the soul, appears to be more repugnant to reason than almost any of the views which have been advanced upon this most dark and difficult subject.

(e) Scripture and Evolution.

It is a little hard on the Bible that it should be called upon to accommodate itself to each successive theory that happens to find favour for the time in scientific or social circles. Only a life time or so since, the variety subsisting between the different races of men was pronounced to be too marked to be consistent with the supposed assertion of Scripture that all men are descended from a single pair. And now mankind in all its varieties is regarded as but the last in a series of developments out of the primitive germs of life, with which the earth seems to have become impregnated at some unknown but very remote period of its existence.

There is something very fascinating it must be allowed in a theory of this sort, professing as it does to account for the rich and varied scene which surrounds us by means of the very fewest and simplest elementary principles. And in itself the supposition that man has been slowly elaborated out of some one of the animal races which preceded him, appears to be as reconcilable with the scripture account of the creation of man as the gradual succession of the various forms of vegetable and animal life (a fact so clearly attested by geology) is reconcilable with the same Scripture narrative of the creation of the world.

There remains indeed the grave and difficult question whether the Evolution hypothesis is sufficient to account for the presence in man of those high moral and spiritual faculties which mark him off so distinctly from the rest of creation, and appear to invest him with a claim to an immediately Divine origin. Mr. Darwin has attempted to

account for the development in man of the former of these two kinds of qualities¹, for on the latter he bestows but little notice.

His explanation, however, cannot be regarded as altogether satisfactory, the more especially as he seems to leave it a matter of chance, so to speak, what particular standard of morality man might be induced by circumstances to adopt for himself in the course of his development.

The whole subject of man's origin and endowments is, it must be acknowledged, most deeply involved in obscurity. To commence with, are those high instincts of which we are distinctly conscious, and which lead us so out of ourselves into the presence of Him who made us, common to the whole race of mankind, or are they confined to a particular portion of it? This is one of the most important questions that can be raised on the subject, and to this at least we may hope to render a direct and full answer. Man as we believe was made in the image and likeness of God, whatever may have been the precise means by which this image and likeness was implanted in him. And we have the direct authority of Scripture for maintaining this image and likeness to be still subsisting in every man and woman born into the world², however much circumstances may for the present obstruct the unveiling of this image and the revealing of this likeness in by far the greater number of instances. Whether, however, this divine image and likeness was the immediate result of a distinct impress of creation, or the more gradual consequence of a slow develop-

¹ "Descent of Man," page 71.

² See above, page 26.

ment from some lower order in nature, is a problem which in our present condition of knowledge, or rather of all but ignorance, of the subject, it would be presumptuous to attempt to solve with any degree of assurance. If we adopt the former and as it would appear the more probable supposition, then in the immediate impression of the divine image on man, we have a case closely corresponding with the first infusion of life into the hitherto inanimate matter of the earth's surface. And in whatever degree the one of these instances is reconcilable with the theory of Evolution so also is the other¹. If, on the contrary, the highest and divinest life in man is but the result of the gradual yet providential unfolding of those moral faculties, which themselves again betray some tokens of their presence in the animal creation, then in this descent of man from some one of the inferior grades in nature we have the most eminent illustration of the manner in which all creation is linked together in one progressive and continuous series, all emanating from the same divine source, and all making its way together under laws of God's own imposing towards its appointed goal.

Next to the Scripture account of the creation of man and his life in Paradise comes that of his temptation and fall ; an account which we have already shown ground for regarding in the light of a symbolical or figurative representation rather than of actual history. That, however, man has to a great extent failed to realize the high position which his inborn capacities and aspirations mark

¹ Compare Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," page 404 (tenth edition), for some valuable remarks on the relation between the spiritual kingdom and Evolution.

out for him is a fact which scarcely admits of dispute, whatever may be the difference of opinion as to the precise means by which this failure or fall of his was brought about.

Again, we gather from other than Scriptural sources, as well as from the part assigned by Scripture itself to the serpent, that on man's first making his appearance on the earth he was surrounded by evil in such kinds and shapes as it was as yet capable of assuming. And without insisting on, though indeed we have no grounds for questioning, the fact of an open and direct temptation of our first parents by the Evil One, we may trace something of the part assigned to the serpent in that played by the animal nature, which, according to the Evolution theory, formed the groundwork of man's own nature, and which came to him, in all probability, already tainted with evil. And it makes but little practical difference whether we regard the degradation to which man has been undoubtedly subject (or if we prefer to put it so, his undoubted failure to rise to the height marked out for him by his capacities) as the effect of an open temptation assailing him from without, or of the serpent's poison working within him. In either case the original source whence the evil proceeded and the result to which it led remain precisely the same.

To conclude then, according to a view strictly reconcilable with both Scripture and Evolution, man, so far at least as this planet of ours is concerned, is a summary of the whole of creation, embodying in himself all that is highest and best in it, and also all that is basest and meanest, and carrying each of these qualities

forward to a degree of development not hitherto attained or even attainable. In himself, in his inborn capacities and gifts, a most distinct advance on all that preceded him in the world, he exhibits a fair promise on the part of good, of much more to follow ; a promise, however, which in the past history of his race has been signally disappointed. How high he was ever raised or succeeded in raising himself above the position which he has for some time occupied, and from what height accordingly he fell, whether again his rise and fall were sudden or gradual, and by what precise means each was brought about, will remain as material for simple belief with some and for historical and scientific investigation with others. But it is a plain matter of fact which admits of no gainsaying, that man is not what he ought to be and might have been, so that he stands in urgent need of help to raise him out of the condition in which he is lying. To this point all human experience unites in conducting us, and it is here that the Gospel meets us with its Divinely-appointed remedy.

II. INTIMATIONS CONTAINED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT RESPECTING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION.

THE parable (if it is to be called a parable) of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.) is confessedly one of the most obscure of our Lord's sayings, and it is to be regretted that an additional obscurity has been thrown over it by our received version, in which the word "hell" appears as the translation of the Greek word "Hades" (verse 23), whereas, it is well known that Hades is the equivalent for the Hebrew *Sheol*, and stands for the invisible world of spirits parted from the body by death. The Jews in the days of our Saviour appear to have held that a portion of this invisible world was set apart for the souls of the righteous, and this they distinguished by the name of Paradise, or Abraham's bosom. And that some such division or distinction actually exists, may be inferred from our Blessed Lord's promise to the penitent thief on the cross: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise¹."

Whilst, however, thus much is comparatively clear, it cannot be denied that the general meaning and drift of the parable is very far from being so. There appears to be a connection between this parable and that of the unjust

¹ Luke xxiii. 43.

steward, which almost immediately precedes it; indeed, a link of connection between the two is plainly discernible in verse 11, which comes in between them: "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your charge the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" Now the rich man in the parable had not proved himself faithful in that which had been committed to his keeping. The unrighteous mammon had been intrusted to his charge, and he had abused the trust. He is an illustration of the first woe denounced by our Saviour¹, as Lazarus is an illustration of His first blessing². The "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation," is almost the same, word for word, as the answer of Abraham to Dives: "Remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things." It is worthy of remark, however, that, beyond this, no charge is brought against the rich man; just as nothing is recorded of Lazarus beyond the bare fact of his having been subjected to a life of poverty and its attendant suffering. So that it would seem that we are here called upon to observe the natural fruit of poverty and wealth respectively, when each is left entirely free to work itself out to its legitimate results without any check or modification. Besides which, we are also bid to expect a compensation in the next world to redress the balance of this. In so doing, however, we have to beware of confounding the torments (*βάσανοι*) which the rich man is described as suffering in Hades with the punishment reserved for the wicked at the final judgment. We must

¹ Luke vi. 24.

² Luke vi. 20.

also beware of regarding the one as leading on naturally and necessarily to the other. Some light may, perhaps, be thrown on the duration, if not on the nature, of the torments inflicted on the rich man in Hades from the following passage in the parable of the two debtors: "His Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors (*τοῖς βασανισταῖς*) till he should pay all that was due unto him¹." Now these words appear to suggest the possibility at least of an end to the debtor's punishment. And may not the same be supposable in the case also of the rich man? Does not the title of "son," addressed to him by Abraham, seem to imply that he was not altogether abandoned by God? And in the request made by the rich man on behalf of his brothers, have we not a distinct sign of improvement in his character after death, the result, it would seem, of the punishment then inflicted on him, since all through his life on earth he appears to have had no thought for any one except himself?²

On the whole, then, there appears to be ground for hope, that whilst a state of suffering after death awaits all who have been unfaithful to the trust committed to them in this life, yet this suffering is in some instances at least of a remedial character, to be followed ultimately by forgiveness. There may be forgiveness in the next world for some sins which have not been forgiven in this.

¹ Matthew xviii. 34. *Βασανιστής* may mean either the actual inflictor of torture or the person who superintends and regulates it. It may also denote the keeper of the prison where the accused is put to work without any actual torture being inflicted on him.

² Compare Olshausen's Commentary on this parable. "Nothing can be here said of the everlasting condemnation of the rich man inasmuch as the germ of love and of faith in love is clearly expressed in his words."

The concluding words of the parable, "if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," have an ulterior purpose with which we are not at present concerned. It is with the condition of the dead, not of the living, that we have here to do.

The second passage of Scripture to which I would invite attention is 1 Peter iii, 18-20, to which must be appended, as practically forming part of it, iv. 6: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which, also, he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah;" "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (Revised Version). And here, at all events, we have no mere figurative expressions to deal with, as may, to a certain extent, be the case with the parable we have just been considering. We have here a definite statement of an actual historical event, and, in spite of the great authority of Bishop Pearson and others, the passage asserts most plainly¹ that, in the interval between his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ in the spirit went and preached in Hades to the disembodied spirits of those who had been disobedient (or had refused to believe) when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, and in consequence of

¹ See Karslake, "Intimation of Holy Scripture as to the state of man after death," Lecture IV; and Farrar, "Early Days of Christianity," page 94 (popular edition); Dörner, "System of Christian Doctrine," iv. 127 (English translation).

their disobedience (or unbelief) had been swept away by the Flood.

It will naturally be asked why were these sinners so selected out of all the number of sinners that had ever lived and died? And it may be suggested in answer that it was for the purpose of announcing the retrospective working of Christ's death, and of signifying that no distance of time, however remote, could place the souls of men out of the reach of His sympathy and help. Anyhow we have here before us the case of men who had been repeatedly called to repentance by the great preacher of righteousness in their day, but had refused to listen to him, and had consequently died in their impenitence. Yet even to the souls of these men Jesus Christ came and preached thousands of years after their death, and we may take it for granted that it was not in mere mockery, but that the purpose of His coming and preaching to them was to call them the second time to repentance, and to save them from the sins in which they had died; so that as the apostle says of them in the second of the two passages in his epistle which I have quoted, "for this cause was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

But what a wide door of hope is here opened to us in respect of all those at least, and they form an overwhelming majority of the human race, who have had no greater opportunity offered to them in this life for repenting and believing in Jesus Christ than was offered to these sinners before the flood. Surely with such words as these of the apostle before us we ought to be very careful about setting

any bounds to God's long-suffering and to His forgiveness of sinners, and especially we ought to beware of making the instant of a man's death the instant also of the final determination of his state in eternity.

Let us now turn to the brighter side of the subject, and consider what Scripture says respecting the intermediate condition of those souls which have departed this life in the faith of Christ. This condition then is most frequently described in Scripture as one of rest and sleep, images which taken simply by themselves are suggestive of a state of partial, if not entire, unconsciousness in the souls thus referred to. There are, however, many passages in Scripture altogether inconsistent with such a supposition. Not to insist on such as in the book of Revelation, for instance, may admit of a figurative meaning, we find St. Paul reckoning on his own death as a clear gain to him compared with his life here : "To me," he says, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain¹." But how, it may well be asked, could he make use of such language respecting his death if it were going to consign him to a state of mere forgetfulness? How again can we enter into the eagerness with which he looked forward to being absent from the body and present with the Lord², if this presence were going to be robbed of its chief value to him, through his want of consciousness of it?

To this argument it may be further added, that the distinct consciousness which as we have seen Scripture attributes to those who have left this world in a state of impenitence, may be regarded as a proof of the consciousness of those also who have departed in the faith of Christ.

¹ Philippians i. 21.

² 2 Cor. v. 6.

As to the precise nature of the employment of the soul whilst thus absent from the body and present with the Lord, we can infer very little from Scripture. The book of Revelation speaks of the sacrifices of prayer and praise and thanksgiving, as continually being offered by the departed saints; at the same time there are passages in other books of Scripture which are appealed to in disproof of their being engaged in any work of a more active character. There is, for instance, the declaration of our Blessed Lord Himself, "I (or we) must work the works of Him that sent me whilst it is day, the night cometh when none can work¹," words which at first sight seem quite decisive on the subject. And yet we learn from St. Peter's first epistle that this declaration of our Lord was followed by His going immediately after His death and preaching to the spirits in prison; so that we may infer the possibility, at least, of His faithful servants following Him in a similar kind of work in the intermediate state after working out their lives for Him here. It may be objected that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus represents an impassable gulf fixed between the righteous and the sinners in the spirit world of Hades. But besides that this gulf is represented as interposing no hindrance to the interchange of speech between those on either side of it, we must also bear in mind that this whole description refers to a state of things previous to our Lord's death, and so also previous to His making a passage for Himself, at least, across this hitherto impassable gulf. And it is quite conceivable that the communication once effected may have been afterwards kept open for the same purpose as that for which it was

¹ John ix. 4.

originally made. And that some great crisis and consequent change did actually take place in the condition of the righteous as well as the impenitent souls in Hades, may be gathered from more than one passage in Scripture. For instance, we read of our having come to the spirits of just men *made perfect*¹, and made so, it would seem through the coming of Christ, since a chapter or two before² many of these just men are described as having "died in faith without receiving the promises, God having provided some better thing for us that they apart from us *should not be made perfect*." The same inference may be drawn from the words, "from henceforth," in the well-known passage in the book of Revelation³, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them" (Revised version). And it is also worth remarking that the word "*κόποι*" denotes labours of the more distressing and exhaustive sort, so as to leave a wide field of ministration still apparently open to those who have been discharged from them. The comment has been also made, though I must own to feeling some difficulty in accepting it, that the works (*ἔργα*) here spoken of as following with them, consist not merely in the memory or the reward of works done in this life, but the very works themselves, so that "the faithful servant of God bears with him those faculties, and is permitted and enabled to do those works in such form and such degree as may be consistent with his condition in the intermediate state"⁴.

There is one other point in connection with this subject

¹ Hebrews xii. 23.

² Hebrews xi. 40.

³ Rev. xiv. 13.

⁴ "Sermons on Church Doctrine," etc., by Canon Cook, page 171.

which must not be passed over without notice. The custom of offering up prayers for the dead is unquestionably of very early date in the Church, as may be seen by the inscriptions in the Catacombs, and by passages in early, though not the earliest, Christian writers. We are, however, here confining ourselves strictly to Scriptural authority, and there is, I believe, only one passage in all Scripture to which appeal can be made in support of it, and the meaning of that one passage is somewhat obscure : "The Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus ; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain ; but when he was in Rome he sought me diligently and found me (the Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day), and in how many things he ministered at Ephesus thou knowest very well ¹." This passage opens with a prayer for the family of Onesiphorus, and we may take it for granted that this prayer was offered up on behalf of persons then living. Whether Onesiphorus himself was alive or not at the time we cannot positively determine, but the general tenour of St. Paul's language respecting him would, I think, naturally lead us to suppose that he was dead. But even assuming this to be the case, I would ask whether this solitary and parenthetical ejaculation is of itself sufficient to support the huge superstructure which it has been attempted to raise upon it. It may indeed be argued that the mere absence of Scriptural condemnation of what, according to some, was a common practice among the Jews of that time, is of itself a sufficient justification of it. On the other hand, it must be allowed, that if prayers for the dead are in any way

¹ 2 Tim. i. 16-18.

useful to those for whom they are offered, they must be useful in the very highest possible degree, in which case they are not only allowable, but imperatively demanded of us. Yet if this be so, how comes it that the same Scripture which keeps continually insisting on the duty of praying for our fellow-creatures who are on the earth with us should be so silent on the duty of praying for the dead? To say the very least of it, a custom which finds such very slender support in Scripture stands on a very different footing from the great Scripture doctrines, which are so firmly embodied and so distinctly set forth in the formularies of our Church.

III. INTIMATIONS CONTAINED IN THE GOSPELS, ACTS, AND EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, RESPECTING THE FUTURE OF THE JEWS.

AMONG all the enigmas propounded to us by history there is not one which possesses so near a claim upon our attention, or which appeals so forcibly to our natural sense of curiosity as that presented by the spectacle of the Jewish people. "Present," as has been well said of them, "in all countries and with a home in none, intermixed and yet separated, and neither amalgamated nor lost, but like those mountain streams which are said to pass through lakes of another kind of water, and keep their native quality to repel commixture, they hold communication without union, and may be traced as rivers without banks in the midst of the alien element which surrounds them ¹."

¹ Davison on Prophecy, page 423. Speaking again of the comparison which has been sometimes instituted between the Jewish people and the Gipsies, Davison proceeds to remark as follows: "I cannot suppose that any person will seriously set up for the parallel to this fate of the Jewish people, the equivocal history of an obscure wandering race, who are permitted to hang upon the outskirts of society, and who keep up certain usages and habits of life without settlement or intermixture and incorporation with others. Of this wandering horde there is no evidence of their ever having

Of all the races at present existing on the face of the earth, the Jew, and the Jew alone, carries us straight back without a break to the days of Abraham. He forms the chain which links the successive ages of the world together, the centre round which the old-world empires naturally group themselves.

Far more than this, he is the source from which our religion as Christians derives itself; and if, since his rejection of the Saviour on His first appearance, the Jew himself has fallen from the high position which he once occupied, still his very sufferings in all the countries to which he has been driven keep up a continual appeal to our sympathies, and all the more so as we bear in mind that his very unbelief first opened the door for the admission of us Gentiles to the Gospel blessings.

But the Jew is not simply an enigma demanding solution. Besides being a mystery, he is also a revelation. Besides exhibiting in himself a relic and sample of past ages, he is also a standing prophecy and pledge of the fulfilment in times to come of the rich promises made of old by God to his forefathers. Why, it may be asked, has God singled out this one of the old-world races for such careful preservation? Why has He kept it so singularly existed as a collective, independent people, and having lost that state; there is no evidence of their having existed in any form and maintained their succession for a length of time to be compared with the Jewish dispersion; and they escape now in their insulated freedom by connivance and toleration, in the open neglected frontier between society and solitude. Whereas the Jewish people have lived in the full communication of public intercourse; they have lived in the heart of cities, in the crowded seats of commerce, and in those relations and habitudes of life which most effectually obliterate original distinctions of lineage and country," etc.

apart from the rest of mankind in all the countries through which it is scattered, except it be that He has still some high destiny in store for this the most highly favoured, though at the present time the most signally disowned and dishonoured, of all nations?

I do not propose entering upon a discussion of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the future of the Jewish people, partly because of the vastness of the subject, but chiefly because of the difficulty of deciding how far these prophecies are to be taken in their literal and how far in a figurative meaning. I propose, therefore, to confine myself to the few scattered hints which are to be found relative to this subject in the sayings of our Blessed Lord and His disciples, with the addition of the one epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. And I commence with the eleventh chapter of this epistle, dealing as it does with the subject before us in distinctly literal and not figurative language. First, then, let us direct our attention to the singularly high position assigned to the Jews by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. The Jewish race, perhaps we should be more correct if we said the Jewish patriarchs, to whom God's promises of old were made, form the olive tree into which we Gentiles, and therefore originally branches of a wild olive tree, have been grafted. So that we ourselves are growing upon a Jewish stock, and through it are drawing our life and privileges as Christians. It is true that this present dispensation under which we are living is emphatically the time of us Gentiles, not of the Jews. This time commenced with the Jews' open rejection of Christ, owing to which we Gentiles have succeeded, for a time at least, to

the place which was once held by them in God's favour. This present state of things, however, is not to last for ever. The day is to come, so St. Paul distinctly intimates, when the veil of Jewish unbelief will be lifted, when the natural branches which were once broken off will be grafted in again upon their own olive tree. And so as the apostle proceeds to say, "all Israel (and not a mere remnant as hitherto) will be saved." But, further, not only will all Israel itself be saved, but it will also become the instrument of salvation for the whole world. Once already the world has been largely indebted to the Jews, but it will have to become indebted to them to a much greater extent. So at least the Apostle's words appear to imply, "If their fall is the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness." And again, "If the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but *life from the dead*?" (verse 15). I take these last words as expressive of the effect which is to be produced upon the world at large by the conversion of the Jews to faith in Christ. And this is the meaning assigned to them by some of the best commentators. Bengel, for instance, gives the following paraphrase: "*Ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν* vita eorum qui fuerant mortui. Sermo est de vivificatione totius ut non sit residua massa mortua. Totius generis humani sive mundi conversio comitabitur conversionem Israelis." "The conversion of the whole world will accompany or follow close upon the conversion of Israel." It will accompany or follow, it will not precede it. It will be its effect, not its cause. But at this point I would just stop to ask whether this view of the world's future is in accordance with the views commonly enter-

tained on this subject? Are we not inclined to flatter ourselves that this present dispensation, this time of the Gentiles in which we are living, is of itself gradually conducting us towards the realization of the promises so freely and widely poured forth by the prophets of the Old Testament in their anticipation of the time when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea¹?" I would ask, however, whether this is the condition towards which we are actually and naturally tending at the present time? And I would ask further, whether our Blessed Lord Himself or any of His apostles held out the least encouragement to the popular view of the subject? Do they not, on the contrary, one and all look forward to a general falling away in the latter days from the faith and love in which the Church first started on its way to meet its Lord? And instead of promising a continual growth and advance in spiritual life, do not they forebode that very state of decay and death in which the apostle describes the world as lying previously to its restoration to life through the instrumentality of the Jewish nation?

Let us now turn to the intimations of changes to be wrought in the Jews themselves, so as to fit them for playing the high part assigned to them by the Apostle of the Gentiles. And first, then, the apostle's words already quoted imply distinctly that the Jews are one day to be converted from their present state of unbelief to faith in Christ. Indeed, nothing short of this faith can ever avail to graft them again upon their own olive tree from which

¹ Isaiah ii. 4; xi. 9.

their unbelief alone broke them off. Then, again, besides their conversion to the true faith, we find intimations here and there in the Gospels of their future restoration to their own land. For instance, we find our Lord predicting to His disciples, as they sat together on the Mount of Olives, that Jerusalem should be trodden down (or trodden) of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled¹, from which it would appear that we may look forward to the restoration of Jerusalem at the end of those times into the hands of its original possessors.

I do not propose to enter upon the question whether this restoration of the Jews to the land of their forefathers is to precede or follow their conversion, or how far the great tribulation spoken of in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew is connected with either or each of these two events. These are subjects which would be best considered in close connection with the Old Testament prophecies respecting the future of the Jews, upon which I have purposely abstained from entering. I will therefore confine myself to the remark, that there are sayings of our Blessed Lord which seem to imply that closely following upon their restoration or conversion, or both, He Himself will make His appearance amongst them in their own land. What else can be the meaning of His words addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem on the occasion of His last public appearance among them previous to His crucifixion? "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, that ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord²." Again, besides this allusion to His own return, there are

¹ Luke xxi. 24.

² Matthew xxiii. 39.

other sayings of our Lord which seem to intimate that He will be accompanied on His return by those who have been most faithful to Him at His first coming. Take for example the words addressed to His apostles: "Verily I say unto you, that ye that have followed me, in the regeneration (*τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ*), when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel¹." I need scarcely remark that "judging" means here, as in other places of Scripture, the bearing rule for a continued period, and not simply the exercise of a judicial power once for all. And I may refer for a similar meaning of the word "judge" to 1 Cor. vi. 2: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" as also to the verse next following, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

Pointing full in the same direction with our Lord's sayings, last quoted, are those addressed by Him to the apostles at the last supper: "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom²." I may, I think, add our Lord's words to Nathanael: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man³." And now I will ask whether these passages, to which many others might be added, do not concur in sanctioning the belief that the announcement made by the angel to the Blessed Virgin is one day to receive its full and literal accomplishment. "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever (or

¹ Matthew xix. 28.

² Matthew xxvi. 29.

³ John i. 51.

as the margin of the Revised Version has it, unto the ages); and of his kingdom there shall be no end¹." It is no doubt very difficult for us to divest this prophecy of the figurative meaning which has so long gathered about it. And yet the more we study it by the light of other Scriptures, such as those just adduced, and which will scarcely admit of such figurative interpretation, the more we shall be inclined to the belief that its most literal is also its truest meaning.

I will conclude with inviting attention to two passages at the commencement of the Acts, closely connected together by means of a far from common word, yet in this instance common to each. In the opening verses of the first chapter of the Acts, we find the disciples assembled round their Lord on the very morning it would seem of His Ascension, after He had been showing Himself to them at intervals during the forty days which followed His resurrection, and had instructed them in the things concerning the kingdom of God. And with these instructions, be it remembered, so recently and fully impressed on their minds, we find them putting this their last question to Him, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore (*ἀποκαθιστάνεις*) the kingdom to Israel?" Do not the very terms in which this question is conveyed suggest that this restoration of the kingdom to Israel formed a part, at least, of the things concerning the kingdom of God, in which they had so recently been instructed? And though our Lord gives no direct answer to their question, still, in telling them as He does, that it is "not for them to know times and seasons which the Father hath set within His own authori-

¹ Luke i. 32, 33.

ty," He seems to allow that the only mistake into which they had fallen, or were likely to fall, respected *the time* at which this restoration was to take place, not the restoration itself. And now from this passage let us pass on to the speech of St. Peter, recorded in the third chapter of the Acts. This speech was delivered by him after the descent of the Holy Spirit, when, consequently, any lingering misconception, if he had entertained any, respecting the nature of the coming kingdom, must have been swept away. And after commencing his speech to his fellow-countrymen with the words, "Ye men of Israel," he concludes it as follows: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration (*τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως*) of all things whereof God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began ¹."

I have already touched on the recurrence of a most significant word in the above two passages, viz. *ἀποκαθιστάνειν* and *ἀποκατάστασις*, varied only by the change from the verb into the noun substantive. And this recurrence of the same word seems to imply a sameness of meaning in the word in each of the two passages where it is found, especially when we bear in mind that the words of each were spoken by apostles, in all probability by the same apostle, and within a very few days of each other. And does it not seem then as if the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, which formed the subject of the apostles' question

¹ Acts iii. 19-21 (Revised Version).

to Christ, also formed the subject of Peter's speech to his fellow-countrymen only a few days afterwards? In confirmation of this view let me refer again to the concluding words of St. Peter's speech, "the restoration of all things whereof God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Now we know from more than one passage in St. Paul's epistles, that there was one future event which was not revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament, and that was the admission of the Gentiles to an equal share with the Jews of the Gospel blessings. Consequently it could not have been this or anything directly connected with it, that St. Peter referred to when he spoke of "the restoration of all things whereof God had spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets." But what else then could he be referring to except that which his words, addressed as they were to Jews like himself, seem naturally to refer to, viz. the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, respecting which the apostles had shortly before put the question to Jesus Christ, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Putting then all the above passages together which I have quoted or referred to, and reading them in the light which they mutually throw on each other, we are, I think, naturally led to the following conclusion—that we are to look for a literal re-establishment, at some future time, of the Jews in their own land, preceded or followed by their conversion to faith in Christ, and by a literal presence of Jesus Christ in this His kingdom, accompanied, it would appear, with the presence of His saints in glory, under whose authority and administration the Jewish nation will reach a higher

pitch of pre-eminence than it has ever as yet attained to ; and after being made the instrument for the recovery of the world at large from a state of death in unbelief and sin, to a condition of life in faith and holiness, it will thenceforward continue to exist "unto the ages" as the source, or at least dispenser, of all kinds of blessing, both temporal and spiritual, to all the nations.

IV. REVELATION AND SCIENCE.

THERE are certain truths, of which it is a special characteristic, that clear and certain as they are in themselves, they yet grow fainter and fainter in proportion as we attempt to follow them out in detail into all the remote consequences to which they apparently tend. And at last we are forced to confess that we have gone beyond them in our search, without, however, being able to lay our finger on the precise spot where they actually terminate. On the other hand, we ourselves are so disposed by nature or circumstances as to rest satisfied with nothing short of the most exact and complete conception of every object that comes in our way. Accordingly, whenever we fall in with any of these truths of which I am now speaking, we immediately proceed to invest them with a character to which they themselves make no pretension; and which, if they were able to speak for themselves, they would be the very first to repudiate. Either we seek to confine them within too narrow boundaries, or we claim an absolute exception for them from all limitations whatever. And so in our eager search after precision, we in the one case stunt and maim the very truth itself whose advocates we have constituted ourselves, and in the other

case by seeking to extend it beyond its proper limits we force it to encroach upon the province of some other truth, which has an equal claim with this one on our recognition and acceptance.

For an example of the first of these injurious methods of proceeding, I may appeal to a large body of so-called dogmatic teaching which affects to give us precise and full information respecting great truths which Scripture has left, and purposely left, in a great measure indefinite. And as the result, we are presented with a series of pictures clearly drawn, and often rich with colouring, which, at the same time, convey a very incomplete and too often incorrect likeness of the truths which they profess to describe.

It is, however, to the second of these injurious methods of dealing with the truth that I am inviting special attention, provocative, as it is, of most, if not all, the apparent contradictions between Revelation and Science. And here let me take two examples by way of illustration, one from the department of Physical Science and one from that of Revelation.

The whole edifice, then, of Physical Science is based on the supposition that nature is invariably obedient to the same laws, so that, given such and such antecedents, such and such results are certain to follow. It is plain that, without the aid of this hypothesis, physical science could not advance one single step, much less could it have made the gigantic strides which have of late attracted such attention, and which have invested it with so much importance. And so far as depends upon the tests which can be applied to this hypothesis, there cannot be any

doubt of its correctness, so that for all practical purposes the unvarying regularity of nature may be accepted as an ascertained truth, and it is as important as it is unquestionable. It becomes, however, quite a different matter when, from applying this principle to all the phenomena lying within our reach, we extend it so as to make it embrace all time past and future, and when we affirm that not only so far as we can observe for ourselves, nature is thus invariable in her operations, but also that there never was an occasion, and never can be one, when she was or will be otherwise. Whereas we do not know, we never can know with certainty, all that nature has gone through in the past or all that lies before her in the future. It is true that we cannot appeal to the future for confirmation of what I am now saying, but there are one or two points at least in nature's past history which science itself is compelled to recognize as exceptions to this general law, or if not as exceptions, it is at least bound to confess that they lie altogether out of the reach of its comprehension and explanation. The first introduction of life into the world is one of these exceptions, the first coming of matter into existence, and the first impulse that was needed to set it in motion are other exceptions¹. And with instances such as these before us, what right have we to assume as a matter of course that nature never has been and never can be otherwise than regular in her operations?

The fact is that the regularity of the course of nature is one of that very class of truths to which I commenced with calling attention.

¹ This subject is somewhat more fully entered upon in the paper which follows.

It is an unquestionable truth for all practical purposes to which we can wish to apply it, and it is so widely extended that it appears to us to be absolutely free from all kinds of limitation, and yet we have the very best reason for asserting that it is not so absolutely illimitable as it appears to be. But this being so, it is putting this truth to a most unfair and hurtful use when it is applied, as it too commonly is at the present day, as a lever for overthrowing our faith in those miracles which are inseparably interwoven with the texture of the Gospel narratives. Why, we may most reasonably ask, may not these miracles be just such exceptions to the general law of the regularity of nature as those just instanced, the miracle, for so we may well call it, of the first introduction of life into the world, the miracle of the creation of matter, the miracle of the first impulse which was needed to start it on its way towards its present stage of existence?

And now let us turn to the other example which I proposed to adduce of the same natural tendency of our minds, only exhibited in a very different department, that of theology. The inspiration of Holy Scripture is a doctrine which has commanded the universal assent of Christ's Church in all ages; and it finds a ready response in the heart of every earnest and unprejudiced reader. It is a truth warranted by numerous passages in the New Testament, which expressly affirm the inspiration of the Old Testament, and it is reflected back with at least equal force from the pages of the Old Testament upon those of the New. Again, as regards the New Testament in particular, it is confirmed by the close personal intercourse

which subsisted between the Apostles and their Divine Master during the whole course of His earthly ministry, and by His promise and gift to them of the Spirit. It is, moreover, distinctly implied in the case of St. Paul, the last of the Apostles, by his own express claim to an immediately Divine source for his commission and authority. Last, and perhaps not least, it is confirmed by the striking difference observable between the Scripture writings and those which come closely after them, if not of the same age with them¹. And yet, with the fullest conviction of this truth of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, we shall find it impossible to describe precisely what is meant by inspiration or to fix its exact limits.

We shall not indeed have the slightest hesitation in accepting all that Scripture reveals to us respecting God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, whether as regards the nature and attributes of each or the relation they severally occupy towards ourselves. Again, we unhesitatingly believe in the Scripture records of those great events in the world's history which were employed in embodying or setting forth the dealings of God with man in the great work of his salvation. We believe that under the guidance of God's good Spirit, and with the helps which God's own providence has supplied to us, we shall be led through a devout study of Scripture into all "the truth"² which concerns us as Christians.

¹ The epistle of Clemens Romanus was in all probability written before the Gospel of St. John, and the lately recovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" is assigned by some to as early, or almost as early a date as the Epistle of Clemens.

² *Eis pāsan tēn alētheian*, "all the truth," John xvi. 13 (Revised Version), not into "all truth," as our Received Version has it. The difference between the two is a very wide one.

More than this we neither need nor ought to care to learn from the study of Scripture.

Yet here again the mind in its eager search after exactness, is too easily beguiled into one or the other of two extreme views of inspiration, extremes which, though far from equally mischievous, are yet equally at variance with the real facts of the case. Either we proceed on the principle of gradually eliminating one element after another of the truth contained in the doctrine of inspiration until we have reduced it to a mere synonym for the highest attainable flight of merely human wisdom and goodness, or we extend the doctrine so as to make it responsible for every incidental expression in Scripture respecting matters of all sorts, such as those of science or history. Whereas, in point of fact, Scripture nowhere advances such absolute claims on its own behalf, neither have any such claims been ever advanced for it by the Church at large. And when we come to examine the Scriptures closely, we find ample refutation of the pretensions which have too often been urged by its zealous but narrow-minded and prejudiced advocates. For instance, we find unimportant details of fact as recorded in the New Testament inconsistent with statements of the same fact as recorded in the Old Testament¹. We find quotations made by New Testament writers from the Old Testament not made in the exact words of the writer from which they are taken, as, according to the theory of verbal inspiration, they ought to have been. And, to come to a point which specially concerns us here, we find in the opening chapters of Genesis accounts given us of

¹ See Alford's note to Matthew xxvii. 9.

the creation of the world, which, if we had to take them as literal narratives of what actually happened, would be at variance with the records inscribed on the strata of the earth's surface. And so the extension of the doctrine of inspiration beyond its proper limits, would force Scripture into a conflict with science on grounds which science may justly claim for its own, and from which it can maintain its claims at the utmost possible advantage. There is, of course, the old and oft-repeated argument in behalf of the literal or verbal inspiration of Scripture, that if we once allow any part of Scripture to be uninspired, we shall never know where to stop. And so, also, precisely in the same manner, the advocates of the invariable regularity of nature can argue, that if they once allow a single break in this regular succession they destroy the whole basis on which physical science rests for its support, and reduce nature from an orderly series of events to a hopelessly confused scene of uncertainty and disorder. The line of argument is precisely the same in each. In each it proceeds from the same bias in our mental nature or education, the same craving after precision, no matter what the subject matter is with which it is called upon to deal. The only difference between the two cases is, that the phenomena with which physical science is concerned make their appeal to the senses and intellect alone, whilst the doctrine of inspiration appeals principally, though by no means exclusively, to the spiritual faculties in man, and by these, accordingly, it has to be principally discerned and accepted.

Still, with this acknowledged difference between the

two, the resemblance is quite sufficient for all the purposes for which I have adverted to it. In each there is the same kind of general, though not absolutely universal, truth to be apprehended, with the same practical results to be derived from it as if there were no limits at all to be assigned to it. In each, again, there is the same impossibility of distinguishing the exact boundary line by which the truth in question is circumscribed, and so prevented from encroaching on other truths. In each there is the same call for fairness on our part in dealing with the subject before us, and for conforming our minds to the exact amount of evidence in each case, in the place of seeking to impress the evidence with forms of our own conceiving, to the prejudice of the very truth itself whose cause we are engaged in promoting.

V. SOME SPECIAL FORMS OF UNBELIEF AT THE PRESENT TIME.

It will be well perhaps to begin with distinguishing between those forms of unbelief which restrict themselves to a denial of that faith which is peculiar to us Christians, and those which cut at the very roots of all religion. To commence, then, with the latter. On the assumption, firstly, that all our knowledge is derived to us through the senses, and secondly, that all knowledge so derived is necessarily finite, the positivist assures us that whatever transcends or professes to transcend the finite is necessarily a delusion. It is impossible, we are told, for man to know anything or any power higher than himself; so that man himself, only viewed collectively in the race and not in the individual, is the only true object of religious worship, if indeed any service thus paid is to be dignified with such a title¹. A like refusal, though under a less scientific form, to accept anything that is not easily comprehended, and that is not at the same time supported by the most palpable proofs, constitutes the characteristic feature of Agnosticism and other kindred forms of modern unbelief.

¹ Mr. Frederick Harrison, in his address of Jan. 1, 1885, disclaims the terms "worship," "service," and "religion" as inappropriate to what he somewhat apologetically calls the "cult" of the Positivist.

And how are we to deal with such wholesale denials of all religious belief, especially with the last-named form of it, whose very name appears to remove it out of the reach of argument? Yet what mere argument may fail of accomplishing may be safely left to be disposed of by a far higher power. However man first came by religion, which will in all probability remain for ever as a problem to be discussed by philosophers, it is a plain matter of fact, which all additional researches tend to establish beyond all dispute, that man, so far back as we can distinctly trace him, has always been in possession of, let us rather say has always been possessed by some form of religious belief¹.

Belief in a power, a Being beyond, above, stronger, wiser, and better than himself, *is an absolute necessity of man's nature*, and with this permanent provision for its establishment and maintenance in the inmost recesses of man's being, we may safely wait for the present shapes, or rather phantoms, of disbelief in the existence of a Supreme Being to go the way of all which have preceded them. "Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret" is a maxim which holds good of nothing more surely than of religious belief. The Divine voice within us refuses to be silenced. It will speak out, it will make itself heard.

From these forms of general disbelief let us next turn to a theory, which, though not directly affecting our belief, has been eagerly caught at by some in the hope of finding in it a weapon of attack upon the Christian faith, if not upon natural religion also. The theory of Evolution does not indeed postulate, but neither does it exclude the supposition of a superintending providence, which from the very

¹ Max Müller, "On the Origin and Growth of Religion," page 4.

first had in view the precise order in which the universe of the present day has unfolded itself. In itself Evolution is no more incompatible with our belief as Christians, than the universally recognized law of successive generations by propagation is incompatible with it. In the hands of all good, all wise, and all powerful Being, the one may be just as instrumental as the other to the working out of the great plan of creation and redemption. If there is a tendency toward unbelief in the theory of Evolution, it is only one which it shares in common with every other theory of physical science at the present day. For however much these may diverge from one another in the paths which they respectively pursue, yet they all concur in maintaining what, indeed, is essential to their own very existence, the supposition of one unvarying principle of order pervading the whole of nature. And so it seems but natural to infer the same unbroken order and regularity in all that has led up to the present condition of the universe, and in all that is to follow it. On the other hand, this wide sweeping inference, however natural it may be for us to draw it, falls short of being a strictly scientific process of reasoning. It is, as logicians would say, an instance of imperfect induction, and one, moreover, which, from the very necessity of the case, must always remain imperfect. For capable as we may be of verifying the unbroken regularity of nature as she at present exhibits herself to us, though even this may possibly be open to dispute, we are and for ever must remain destitute of the means of so verifying it as regards either the distant past or the future. The hypothesis, then, of absolute and undeviating regularity in the course of nature, past and future as well as present, is at the

furthest an hypothesis more or less plausible in itself, but at the same time destined always to remain a mere hypothesis and nothing more—one, too, always liable to be upset by any well established facts which can be shown to be inconsistent with it. And setting aside, for the present at least, those miraculous events on which our belief as Christians partially rests, let us inquire whether there are not some important passages in the past history of the universe irreconcilable with this theory of absolute regularity in nature which is so generally taken for granted, and from which so much is deduced at the present day.

In the first place, then, this theory does not even pretend to account for the first impulse, to say the least of it, which must have been needed to set the so-called laws of nature in motion. Take, for example, the recently propounded hypothesis of Sir W. Thomson, that what we call matter consists of the rotating portions of a perfect fluid which continuously fills space. Now, it has been well remarked of this hypothesis, that “if the antecedent of the visible universe be nothing but a perfect fluid, we cannot imagine it capable of originating such a development in virtue of its own inherent properties¹.” Then secondly, our most eminent masters of physical science, as Tyndall and Huxley, for instance, have come to the conclusion, founded on the most searching tests, that nature has no means at her present disposal for evolving fresh germs of life out of lifeless matter. But how, then, were the first germs of this abundant luxuriance of life, by which we are surrounded, originally produced, except by means of some departure from the order of nature as she exhibits herself to

¹ “The Unseen Universe,” page 155.

us at the present day? With such examples, then, as these before us, we surely have reasonable grounds for calling in question the absolute regularity of nature through all time, of which we hear so much, and from which so much is inferred at the present day.

From these indirect assaults upon our religious belief, let us pass on to the more direct attacks which have been made of late on the contents themselves of Holy Scripture. As regards those which have been directed against various portions of the Old Testament, it will be sufficient here to remark, in the words of the late Bishop Thirlwall, that "with the greater number of these disputed points we appear to have no more practical concern than with those respecting the contents of the histories of Greece or Rome¹." It must, however, be allowed to be very different as regards the attacks which have been made by such writers as Strauss, and Baur, and Renan, on the contents of the New Testament, and especially on the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Yet here it is a most noteworthy and important fact, that the last named, and in many respects the most eminent, of these critics has to a great extent conceded the main point against which the attacks of his predecessors had been directed. That is to say, M. Renan distinctly allows the genuineness of the chief part at all events of the five first books of the New Testament². And what still more vitally concerns our present argument, he as distinctly grounds his objection to the

¹ Bishop Thirlwall's *Charges*, vol. ii. page 83 (Charge VIII).

² See "The Gospel and its Witnesses," by Professor Wace, pp. 24-36. Compare Canon Cook's "Sermons on Church Doctrines and Spiritual Life," page 136, etc.

miracles recorded in these books, on their presumed incompatibility with the modern dictum of absolute regularity in the course of nature¹, a dictum which we have given grounds for maintaining to be itself destitute of solid foundation. Granting, as we of course are bound to do, that we of the present day are unprovided with the means of verifying the Gospel miracles in the scientific sense of the term, we have yet the right to insist on the equally undoubted fact, that our opponents are unprovided with the means of disproving them. So that instead of dismissing the evidence for the Gospel miracles as so many do, without even a hearing, we are bound in fairness to take into account the fact of so many contemporary and independent witnesses having vouched for the actual occurrence of these miracles. We have also to take into account the character of each one of these witnesses, so far as it can be gathered from his own writings or those of his fellows; and if these witnesses approve themselves to be of a character above suspicion, and at the same time competent to observe and describe what they witnessed; if, again, the end for which these miracles are said to have been wrought was worthy of the exceptional means made use of to accomplish it, then we must in fairness allow that the combined testimony of these witnesses in favour of the Gospel miracles far outweighs the amount of antecedent improbability (which we have seen reason for maintaining to be not so very great) that is to be urged against them.

It may, however, be, and has been, objected that it is not sufficient to show a balance, however clear, in favour of these miracles, so long as the evidence falls short in

¹ Wace, page 12.

any degree of absolute demonstration. And in accordance with this spirit of criticism we find an eminent scholar and writer of the present day expressing himself as follows: "I am convinced that no question concerning the validity of mere historical evidence can be absolutely vital to religion. Historical evidence is not a ground on which religion can possibly rest¹." Now if historical evidence constituted the sole, or even the principal ground, for our belief as Christians, there would undoubtedly be great force in such an objection. But in point of fact it contributes a part only, and by no means the chief part, to the evidence in its favour. It is in the exquisite adaptation (like that of a key to its lock) of God's own revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ to our own selves, our highest aspirations, our deepest cravings, that we find the chief ground for our belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. This is the soil into which the historical evidence for our belief strikes its roots, and from whence it draws its ever fresh supplies of strength and growth.

At the same time, whilst we thus discriminate between the two elements, internal and external, which combine

¹ Goldwin Smith on "Rational Religion," page 108. The following are varying forms of the same spirit of objection: "Des vérités historiques qui ont toujours quelque chose d'occasionnel et de fortuit ne sauraient jamais servir de preuves aux vérités nécessaires de la raison."—Lessing ap. Strauss *Essais*, p. 6: "Nur das Metaphysiche keinesweges aber das Historische macht selig."—Fichte: "For a fuller discussion of this subject, I may refer to my 'Historical Religion and Biblical Revelation.'" A summary of the argument contained in that work is admirably given in a review of it by the late Professor Mozley, in the "Guardian." See Advertisement at the end of this volume. See also Note A at the end of this paper.

to form and sustain our belief, we shall find it impossible to separate them from one another. The two are bound up together in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him they bear witness to each other: they intertwine themselves with each other, and they must stand or fall together. Further it may be said, and said most truly, that whatever difficulties may lie in the way of our believing in Jesus Christ, a far greater difficulty lies in the way of our rejecting Him. There can be no question that He claimed to be the Son of God, and that He grounded His claim in part at least on the miracles which He worked. There can be no question, again, that His Apostles Peter and John, and others, professed to have been witnesses of some of these miracles, more particularly they profess to have seen and conversed with their Master after He rose again from the dead. So that we are absolutely driven to the acceptance of one or the other of the two following alternatives. Either Jesus Christ combined with His Apostles for the purpose of imposing a huge deception on the world, or He is actually the Saviour of whom our hearts are in search, and the events to which He and His Apostles bear such simple and consistent testimony have actually taken place.

It may perhaps be suggested that, even granting the eye-witnesses themselves of these miracles to have had sufficient grounds for their belief in Jesus Christ, yet we of the present day, with the great interval which separates us from the time of their occurrence, have no such solid ground for our own belief in Him. But not to insist on other grounds, we have the Apostles' own testimonies in writing before our eyes, and in these we have essentially

the same ground for believing in Christ as those first disciples had who, without ever seeing Him, conversed with those who did. Both we and they come in for our respective share of the great blessing conveyed in our Lord's words to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed;" words, let me add, which formed the dying profession of faith on the lips of so keen and independent an inquirer into historical truth as Dr. Arnold¹.

It is indeed sad to have to witness such a wide falling away at the present time from the faith of our forefathers. But there is at least nothing in it to surprise us. It is only what we have been forewarned of long ago both by our Lord Himself and His Apostles. And, after all, the thick darkness which is at present overshadowing us, may prove to be but the sign and forerunner of the coming day.

¹ "Arnold's Life," by Stanley, vol. ii. 325 (first edition). Compare also the following passage from his "Sermons on Christian Life," page 15 (the sign of the prophet Jonah): "I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them; and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us—that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

NOTE A, p. 75.

How far and in what sense is Christianity to be regarded as *a historical religion*? There are, it must be allowed, a vast number of so-called Christians, whose profession of belief in Jesus Christ means simply that they have been brought up in this profession. They admit the truth of the Gospel history, including the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, just as they admit the truth of many other historical events which they have generally taken for granted. At the same time they have never troubled themselves to inquire into the truth of the one any more than of the other. And they are perfectly consistent in their behaviour, for they feel no more personal interest in the one set of events than in the other. Such persons as these then, if they hear the great truths of Christianity called in question, are very much shocked at what they hear. That is to say, they feel themselves unhinged, and they naturally resent any disturbance to the mental repose, not to say sluggishness, in which they are lying. But they have nothing of their own to set against such questionings, and every repetition of them, like so many shocks of a battering ram or cannon ball, tends to make them totter more and more in their belief, such as it is, until it falls. Such a belief then as this lies simply on the surface of the mind. At the same time, what there is of it is of the nature of Historical Religion and it alone.

Then, again, there is a considerable number of so-called believers, who have taken a distinct step in advance beyond this. They have set themselves to investigate the *truth* of the Gospel history, and of the miraculous events

which are recorded in it. And they have come to the conclusion that this history is true, and they accept it with all the force of their minds as such. At this point, however, they stop suddenly short. It never occurs to them to look at Jesus Christ in the one essential light in which he is presented to them, as their own Saviour, and the Saviour of the rest of mankind. And they behave as they do simply because in their hearts they do not feel the need of a Saviour. Such persons then may be said to have all that Christianity, viewed simply in the light of a historical religion, can give them. And yet they have penetrated the outer court alone of their religion. They have yet to make their way into the inner sanctuary and to join in its worship. Their religion is as yet a religion of the mind and head alone, not of the heart.

On the other hand, there are very many sincere believers, in the truest sense of the word, in Jesus Christ, whose belief rests very little if at all on historical evidence. They believe because the deep hunger and thirst of their souls have made them look for something to satisfy them. And in the Scriptures they meet with the very bread of life and the water of life which they are in search of. They eat and drink and feel themselves fully satisfied. And yet with the greater number of such people the intellect has very little to do with the formation of their belief. And if you were to speak to them of their religion being a historical religion, they would scarcely comprehend what you were saying. I do not say that the belief of this the majority of true Christians is of an ideally perfect type. It is very far indeed from being so. It is very deficient in the point in which the class of believers last described is strongest. And what is really needed is a combination of both kinds of belief in one and the same person. Of the two, however, the part played by the heart in the formation of Christian belief is by far the most important. It alone is absolutely indispensable.

The title, then, of Historical Religion as bestowed on

Christianity, however correct in itself, appears to be liable to misinterpretation. It directs our thoughts too exclusively to the surface, not to the foundation ; to the body in which the soul is enshrined, not to the soul by which the body is animated and inspired. Whereas, as a matter of fact, Christianity has made its way in the world far more through its appeals to that inner part of our nature, which most truly constitutes ourselves and which is developed to nearly the same extent in all of us, than to that whose cultivation is the exclusive privilege of a favoured few.

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“Religion and History, it is objected, have no common ground whatever whereon to meet. History has for its province the world in which we live; religion has for its province the world above; and whilst history addresses itself to the senses and the understanding, religion addresses itself to our spirits, and places them in direct communication with their divine objects.”

‘Mr. Harris answers this objection by an analogy which deserves serious consideration and a distinct place in the

evidential argument—the analogy, viz. of the formation of our moral and religious habits. What can be more “historical,” he says, more involving material events and incidental events of all sorts than the process by which our characters are formed,—a purely spiritual result by means the most external? If the divine economy for maturing the character of the spiritual being is thus connected with incidental matter, why may not the evidence of a spiritual dispensation be the same?

“The co-existence of certain objects upon the same scene of life with ourselves, is as indispensable a factor in the production of the moral character as is the energy of the soul itself . . . The growth and formation of the moral character is the result of the inward energy of the soul, acted upon by a series of objects presented to it from without. But for the presence of external objects the soul must, as far as we can judge, remain for ever in a dormant state; just as the eye must remain in a dormant state in default of the presence of external objects exciting it to action, and affording it the necessary opportunity for arranging and concentrating its latent power.”

“The influence of parents and tutors, that of companions and friends, especially in early life, the way in which we are affected by particular events, whether losses or accessions, the hereditary transmission of tendencies of mind and temper, all these are essentially historical circumstances. Yet how is our ultimate character moulded by them? how are we, as spiritual beings, turned out of a kind of workshop of events and apparent accidents? and that without any derogation from the principle of free will. The inward energy of the man is required, but the outward incidents are needed too. Or take a more remarkable and striking specimen of the “historical” element in our spiritual growth, in the rise from time to time of extraordinary agents of a moral kind within our sphere:—

“Upon the immense influence exercised by parents and

companions at this early stage of life, it is superfluous to dwell. But it may be less superfluous to remark that, strong as these influences are, yet even they seem at times to be cast into the shade by others still stronger ; especially when, for the first time, at a somewhat more advanced period of life, we are brought into close contact with some one of those prominent characters, whether good or evil, which keep starting up as if for the very purpose of revealing the heights and depths to which our nature is capable of ascending or descending. And strange to say,—strange because, as a general rule, the force of evil example seems to be so much more powerful than that of good, yet, as if in special exception to this rule—the solitary presence of one good and wise man often proves itself to be capable of effecting changes in the minds and hearts of those who are brought within the sweep of its influence, which not even the whole world of evil influences around him can avail to counteract. And here, again, let us reflect that each one of these individual agencies, which contributes so largely towards promoting or retarding the moral development of all around it, is embodied in a distinct historical person, born in such a place and at such a time, but for whose birth at that precise time and place the moral character of perhaps thousands would have assumed a very different form and complexion from that which they actually exhibit. . . . Look, again, at the manner in which the moral influence of a great and good man diffuses itself in the world. The soft or flashing eye, the varying expression of countenance, the tone of voice, the ordinary flow of conversation, the weighty and impassioned words which every now and then force themselves from his lips, or dictate themselves to his pen, all those numerous and multifarious details, from the very least to the very greatest, which together make up the sum of his earthly life, effective instruments as they each of them are, and capable as they prove themselves to be of achieving the most marvellous results, are yet in themselves simple bodily manifestations of inward emotions, which have

to be apprehended first by the bodily senses, and next by the intellectual faculties of others, in order to the appropriation of the reality which they themselves can but feebly symbolize. And how little after all of such manifestations are we permitted to see with our own eyes, or to hear with our own ears, compared with the amount for which we have to be indebted to the eyes and ears of others."

'We have not space for following Mr. Harris into all the details in which he works out this view we have given. We will, however, mention that the subject is ably followed up in the chapter on "The employment of human agency as exemplified in the delivery, etc. of Revelation."

'Revelation,' Mr. Harris observes, 'is criticised with respect to the mode in which it is presented to us, i. e. in the shape of a *book*—a book which has been transmitted through many centuries, a book which has been translated, and of which the translation alone can be read by the great mass of Christians. Again, there are real or apparent incorrectnesses on minor and simply historical and physical subjects in the Bible; differences and apparent or real discords in the statement of the writers on minor points. Whence has all this occasion for criticism arisen? Simply out of the fact that God employs human agency in the work of revelation. Granted this and all to which objection is taken follows; the Book, the transmitted Book, the translated Book, the apparent or real discords of statements. A revelation which is communicated to us by the medium of fellow men, must be subject to the conditions of time which attach to human life, the conditions of language, etc.; it must be a book transmitted through past generations because man lives and dies; it must be a translated book, because differences of language are a characteristic of the condition of man. The employment of human agency assumed then, these criticised features of the actual form in which revelation comes to us are an inevitable consequence. But the principle of the employment of human agency in a revelation is only

analogous to the employment of the same agency for the formation of our moral character :—

“It is precisely this very human aspect of revelation, however it may seem at first sight to constitute a weak point in her position, which in reality provides us with the very point from which we may most securely defend her. For it affords a most remarkable illustration of the great principle which forms the basis of all God’s dealings with man, the principle by virtue of which man himself is made the instrument of every blessing, earthly or spiritual, to his fellow man.

“Upon the general doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, as at once in the highest degree illustrating, and at the same time consecrating the great principle just adverted to, it is unnecessary to dwell. I will only call attention to the fact that in the prophetic office assumed by Jesus Christ in virtue of His humanity, we have an instance of the human expositor of revelation rising to the height of actual identity with the Divine revealer. In the *Word* made flesh we recognise the tone of a voice at once human and divine. Next in order, and forming a like though subordinate example of the same great principle, stand the particular individuals selected from time to time by God to be the bearers of particular revelations to their fellow men, or to record for the benefit of after generations the events with which these revelations were interwoven.”

“The chapter on “The Humanity of Christianity” treats of a kindred subject, viz. of human *media* as not only employed in the communication of revelation, but as adopted and incorporated into its great truths. Human nature is one side of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Concurrence with and sympathy with human nature, its feelings and affections are necessary for entering into the humanity of our Lord :—

“That side of His personality which is turned towards us, in order that by communicating with it we may arrive at the help which lies beyond it, is the very human nature, which in order to our apprehension of it, calls into play just

those faculties of our nature, just those very circumstances of our condition by means of which we are daily and hourly acting our own part on the stage of life."

'The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is the consecration of our whole nature, and gives a spiritual significance to all those human *media* which otherwise might be thought mere accidents of this present life:—

"But how amply does this doctrine of the resurrection of the body confirm the view above taken of the existence of a most thorough correlation between Christianity and our whole nature. How completely does it justify the employment of all those subordinate agencies in the service of religion to which such objection is wont to be taken. Even if the exercise of our bodily and intellectual faculties were strictly confined to this present state of existence, no valid objection could thence be drawn against the temporary employment of them in any service which experience proved them to be capable of exercising. But if these very faculties are destined to survive this present state of existence, and to play their part in the life to come, every shadow of objection against the present employment of them is taken away. We are in fact only making use of one part of our future selves in order to assist another part."

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